Power Concedes Nothing Discussion Guide

Section by Section Themes and Questions

Part 1: Building Progressive Power in the States

This section of *Power Concedes Nothing* contains discussion and analysis of building electoral power in a number of states where the 2020 contest was hard fought: Georgia, Michigan, Arizona, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Florida. But the organizing detailed in these chapters did not start or stop with the 2020 election campaign.

- How did local and statewide organizations turn the disastrous 2016 election results into a catalyst to increase the work of base building and voter engagement? In what ways were 2020's electoral successes a result of long-term organizing?
- In every state discussed, collaboration between different organizations was a vital component of progressive strategy. How do the organizers/contributors involved describe the process of building statewide coalitions? Many groups also had some kind of relationship with organizations and coalitions that function nationwide. What benefits and challenges did those relationships bring with them, and what are your thoughts about how these relationships can best develop going forward?
- How did these statewide organizations work to expand the voter base, particularly among voters of color? What can we learn from the experiences recounted of dealing with the right wing's voter suppression?

Part 2: Communities of Color Drive the Win

The title of this section expresses a key aspect of the 2020 elections: the turnout in communities of color was a decisive factor in the victories won. A theme of this section is the importance of local leaders and organizers engaging with and addressing the specific needs of those communities.

- How did organizations orient their community engagement and voter engagement so that Black, Native, Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander communities felt empowered and built leadership?
- How did progressive organizations, especially those rooted in communities of color, reach those who are termed - too often condescendingly - as "infrequent' or 'unmotivated' voters? In numerous states the increased turnout in communities of color provided the key margin of victory. What kind of ongoing work, electoral

and otherwise, is needed to increase, or even maintain, that level of engagement?
- How did the organizations highlighted in each of the four chapters in this section build infrastructure for the 2020 election and beyond?

Part 3: Workers on the Doors

These chapters focus on the work of labor organizations that mobilized their members to get out the vote in 2020. Contributors in this section describe how they went from engaging members on workplace issues to building their electoral base.

- Trade unions are different from most of the other organizations discussed in this book. Membership is not based on a particular set of politics but on where and for whom members work. How does this affect unions' involvement in politics? What obstacles does it put in the way of labor's involvement in electoral organizing? What benefits does it bring once those obstacles are overcome? How did the workers' organizations discussed in this section motivate their members to take such an active role in the 2020 election campaign?
- What role can unions play in building multi-racial coalitions and large-scale public support for progressive policy goals? What obstacles stand in the way of greater labor-community collaboration? How can electoral engagement be carried out in ways that maximize labor-community cooperation?

Part 4: Bernie, Democratic Socialism, and the Primary Battles

This section focuses on experiences of organizers working directly on Bernie Sanders primary run in 2020 and organizations under the Bernie/Democratic Socialism umbrella. As in 2016, Bernie's campaign was a focus of much progressive energy, and many were disappointed when he did not win the Democratic Party nomination this time around.

- What lessons can be drawn from Bernie's campaign for future progressive presidential bids? What did his campaign - and the primary results in general - tell us about the balance of strength between the different currents in the Democratic Party?
- Discuss the challenges facing grassroots political organizations that back a progressive candidate for office who then loses in a primary to a more moderate Democrat. In 2020, most (but not all) such organizations formally or informally backed the winning Democratic candidate for President, House, or Senate in order to prevent the Trump-dominated Republican Party from gaining power. What do you think was the right course? How do you foresee managing this challenge in 2022 and 2024?

Part 5: Mobilizing Voters Across the Country

Organizations and coalitions that functioned nationwide were a key component of the progressive power-building current that threw itself into the 2020 elections. Several operated on a very large scale and were pushed to develop "big picture" strategies to match.

- How did various national groups engage in local and national election endorsements and then voter turnout? Where did one or another national infrastructure connect with and boost local infrastructure, and what can be learned from those positive experiences?
- One of the arguments in this section is that grassroots and progressive organizations must fully engage in the electoral process – including working for candidates with whom we are not 100% aligned – in order to build the base and infrastructure to wield increasing political power. What does this approach offer in terms of the current threat from the authoritarian right? What does it offer in relation to the Democratic Party?